

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For More Information Contact

Shannon N. Marshall (804) 864-7963

Oct. 10, 2006

VDH 06-56

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATES FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has modified two existing fish consumption advisories for the Maury and James rivers. The advisories are in response to recent fish tissue sample tests conducted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality.

Test results indicate that the levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in fish from these advisory areas exceed VDH's level of concern.

"VDH issues fish consumption advisories to protect people from adverse health effects of contaminants," said Khizar Wasti, Ph.D, director of the VDH Division of Public Health Toxicology. "A fish consumption advisory is not a prohibition of eating fish, but a warning about the contaminants present and the possible health effects on those who consume these fish. Long-term consumption of fish contaminated with high levels of PCBs may increase a person's risk of cancer."

Women who are pregnant or who may soon become pregnant, nursing mothers and young children should not eat fish from these advisory areas to avoid ingesting PCBs.

"Recreational use of water in these rivers does not pose any risk of exposure to PCBs," said Wasti. "We encourage people to continue to fish and enjoy the water for recreation."

Because PCBs tend to concentrate in the fatty tissues of fish, VDH recommends the following precautions to reduce any potential harmful effects from eating fish:

- Eat smaller, younger fish (within the legal limits). Younger fish are less likely to contain harmful levels of contaminants than larger, older fish.
- Remove the skin, the fat from the belly and top, and internal organs before cooking the fish.
- Bake, broil or grill on an open rack to allow fats to drain away from the meat.
- Discard the fats that cook out of the fish.
- Avoid or reduce the amount of fish drippings or broth that is used to flavor the meal.
- Eat less deep-fried fish, since frying seals contaminants into the fatty tissue.
- Try to eat different species of fish from various sources (i.e., different creeks, rivers and streams).

The following advisories were modified due to PCB contamination:

Modified Advisories

- **Maury River** from Buena Vista at Route 60, approximately 15 miles to where it meets the James River: the existing advisory has been updated to include carp. VDH recommends that no more than two meals per month of carp should be consumed.

(more)

- **James River** from the I-95 James River Bridge in Richmond downstream to the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel: the existing advisory has been updated to include additional species, with a consumption recommendation of no more than two 8-ounce meals per month of hickory shad, blueback herring and flathead catfish (less than 32 inches). Additionally, flathead catfish (greater than or equal to 32 inches) should not be eaten. Polythress Run, a small tributary in Hopewell, has been added to the advisory for the lower James River.

For more information on current fish consumption advisories in Virginia and a fact sheet with answers to frequently asked questions on fish consumption advisories, visit VDH's Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on Fish Consumption Advisories.

###